

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Original) A process for arbitrating between active and protected status, comprising the steps  
of identifying a plurality of cards capable of communicating with each other,  
allowing each card to make a determination of the health of another one of the  
cards,  
allowing each card to deliver to another of the cards a vote representative of the  
respective cards determination of the health of the other card, and  
having a respective card determine as a function of delivered votes a health status  
representative of whether the card is to be isolated.
2. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim [[2]] 1, wherein determining as a  
function of delivered votes includes determining as a function of a majority of votes.
3. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein determining as a function of delivered  
votes includes determining as a function of a plurality of votes.
4. (Original) A process according to claim 1, further comprising isolating a card as a function  
of delivered votes.
5. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein making a determination of the health of a  
card includes measuring response time, identifying a parity error, identifying a check sum  
error, and identifying a failure to respond to a command.
6. (Original) A process according to claim 4, wherein isolating a card includes entering a state  
that prevents the card from exchanging data.

7. (Currently Amended) A ~~process~~ process according to claim 4, wherein isolating a card includes disabling a hardware interface to an external system bus.
8. (Currently Amended I) A ~~process~~ process according to claim 1, further comprising a self-diagnostic test for having a card monitor local parameters to determine a health status for the respective card.
9. (Original) A process according to claim 7, further comprising determining an isolation state in response to the self-diagnostic test.
10. (Original) A process according to claim 7, wherein the self-diagnostic test includes monitoring a heartbeat timer.
11. (Original) A process according to claim 1, further comprising the step of monitoring a control signal representative of an instruction to adjust between a protection state and an active state.
12. (Currently Amended) A system for arbitrating between an active state and a protected state, comprising
  - a plurality of ~~devices~~ cards capable of exchanging data, each having
  - a card monitor for monitoring parameters of other cards in the system representative of operating characteristics,
  - a vote out mechanism, responsive to the monitored parameters, for generating a vote signal representative of an assessment of a card's operating condition, and
  - a vote tally mechanism, responsive to vote signals received from other ~~[[card]]~~ cards in the system, and capable of changing an operational state of a respective card in response thereto.

13. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim ~~[[1]]~~ 12, wherein the vote tally mechanism includes a processor for detecting a majority vote with vote signals received.
14. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim ~~[[1]]~~ 12, comprising an isolation processor for isolating the card as a function of delivered votes.
15. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim ~~[[1]]~~ 12, wherein the card monitor includes means for measuring a response time of a card.
16. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim ~~[[1]]~~ 12, wherein the card monitor includes means for detecting an error in a data signal received from a card.
17. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim ~~[[1]]~~ 12, further comprising a lock circuit for requiring a processor to perform a series of predetermined operations to gain access to a memory location.
18. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim ~~[[1]]~~ 12, further comprising a self-diagnostic process for testing local parameters representative of local status.
19. (Currently amended) A system according to claim ~~[[19]]~~ 18, wherein the self-diagnostic process includes means for altering a state of the card.
20. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim ~~[[19]]~~ 18, wherein the self-diagnostic process includes means for driving a card into an isolation state.
21. (New) A process according to claim 4, wherein isolating a card includes disabling an interface that allows the isolated card to deliver the vote representative of the isolated cards determination of the health of another one of the cards.

22. (New) A process according to claim 1, comprising
- adding a card to the plurality of cards, and
  - preventing the addition of the card from interfering with the steps of identifying a plurality of cards, allowing each card to make a determination, allowing each card to deliver, and having the respective card determine a health status.
23. (New) A process according to claim 1, comprising
- removing a card from the plurality of cards, and
  - preventing the removal of the card from interfering with the steps of identifying a plurality of cards, allowing each card to make a determination, allowing each card to deliver, and having the respective card determine a health status.